Article

The putative reader in mass media persuasion – stance, argumentation and ideology

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Abstract

This article explores a framework for analyses of what has variously been termed the 'implied', 'imagined', 'virtual' or 'putative' reader/addressee – the effect by which ostensibly 'monologic' texts, such as news media commentary, political pronouncements and academic essays project particular attitudes, beliefs and expectations on to the reader/addressee. The framework is demonstrated in being applied to an examination of the construal of putative addressee positioning in a selection of mass media texts concerned with the Israeli military's invasion of Gaza in 2014. The framework is novel in the way in which it mobilises the account of the options for dialogistic positioning offered by the appraisal-framework literature, combined with some insights from Toulmin's notion of the argumentative 'warrant'. Conclusions are offered as to how such analyses of the readers being 'written into the text' can extend insights into the rhetorical workings of such texts and their ideological functionality in naturalising particular value positions.

Keywords

appraisal, argumentation, readership, persona, stance

Introduction

This article deals with what has variously been termed the 'implied', 'imagined', 'virtual' or 'putative' reader/addressee (see for example, Hasan, 1999; Schmid, 2014; Thompson, 2012). This is the effect by which ostensibly 'monologic' texts, such as news media commentary, political pronouncements, weblog posts, academic essays and so on, construe for themselves a particular reader or addressee. This effect has been described as 'the reader in the text' or 'writing the reader into the text' (Thompson and Thetela,

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1995) as the author projects particular characteristics, values, dispositions and beliefs on to this 'absent' dialogic partner, at the same time indicating expectations as to whether or not she/he shares these with this reader. This effect operates as this implied addressee, obviously, is not present at the point of textual production to engage interactively – to actually assert, concur, question, doubt, disagree or otherwise have input into the communicative act. By reference to analyses of some news media and political commentaries around conflicts in the Middle East, this article offers new insights both into the often covert linguistic mechanisms involved, and into the rhetorical consequences flowing from the different choices authors may make as to whom they 'write into' their texts – choices as to the specific values these putative addressees are understood to hold and as to whether or not they are presented as sharing these with the author.

The notion that it is possible and revealing to analyse texts from the perspective of the 'reader' or 'readers' who are 'written into the text' has, as indicated, a relatively long history, particularly within literary studies of narrative fiction. This scholarship is informed by the notion that authors, through the 'logic' of the text, build in assumptions as to readers' beliefs about the way the world is and ought to be (readers' anticipated 'world views') and, on the basis of these assumptions, signal expectations as to how readers will respond to the propositions being advanced. In Bakhtinian scholarship, every utterance is said to be marked by 'addressivity' and 'answerability' – the notion that every utterance is addressed to *someone* and anticipates a *response* or an *answer* (see Bakhtin, 1986). From a narrative studies perspective, Schmid (2014) states, 'the term "implied reader" designates . . . the author's image of the recipient that is fixed and objectified in the text by specific indexical signs'(p. 301). Hasan (1999) observes that for the 'virtual addressee' of 'monologic texts', 'all aspects of the interactant relation – their respective status, their social distance, the specific attributes of the addressee – are logically entirely created by the language of the text, none having a basis in reality for obvious reasons' (p. 238). Along somewhat similar lines, Eco (1981), in his literary-critical work on the 'model reader', holds that 'recognition of the reader's response, as a possibility [is] built into the text' (p. 35).

This article contributes to this scholarship in outlining and demonstrating certain new lines of linguistic analysis by which it is possible to offer a systematic, theoretically principled account of just who is being 'written into the text' and the specific mechanisms of 'addressivity' by which this 'interpolation' is achieved. In this, of course, the article is a departure from the many analyses of persuasive texts which have, understandably, focussed primarily on the authorial voice – that is, on authorial stance and resultant textual personas. Naturally, the construed addressee is more elusive from the analytical perspective, most often being imminent in the text rather than overtly articulated, invoked by implicit signals of authorial assumptions and anticipations. As scholars such as those cited earlier have suggested, the nature and linguistic basis of this putative addressee are of intrinsic interest in terms of our understanding of the communicative workings and rhetorical potential of texts – and this article seeks to serve this 'interest'. Through describing this putative addressee and the virtual relations which the author enters into with them, we are able to enhance accounts of the bases on which such texts may be persuasive, of the author's own textually performed persona and of some key ways in which these texts can be 'ideological' in naturalising particular value systems and world views.

This article is also novel in relating the account of the resources available in English for 'dialogistic positioning' set out in the appraisal-framework literature (e.g. Martin and White, 2005; White, 2000, 2003, 2015) to the question of how the putative addressee is construed. An array of published work has applied the appraisal framework's account of dialogistic positioning to analyses of authorial stance and persona. (These resources of dialogistic positioning are mechanisms by which the speaker positions the current proposition retrospectively vis-à-vis prior utterances on the current topic and prospectively vis-à-vis potential responses to the current proposition – and are dealt with in the appraisal literature as the engagement system.). See for example, Becker, 2009; Caldwell, 2008; Coffin and Hewings, 2005; Don, 2012; Fryer, 2013; Miller, 2004; Miller et al., 2014; Swain, 2010. But there has been only occasional consideration of the role these meanings play in construing of putative readers (see for example, Martin and White, 2005: 95; White, 2010; White and Sano, 2006). To my knowledge, there is currently nothing in the appraisal-framework literature where the focus is exclusively on that sub-set of the resources of dialogistic positioning which have implications for construal of putative readerships. This article therefore seeks to substantially extend this prior work by offering a more systematic treatment of this issue than has previously been offered. This article is also novel in that it combines the appraisal-framework approach with some key insights from Toulmin's treatment of the structure of 'everyday argument' – with particular reference to his notion of the 'warrant', the underlying, typically unstated assumption or set of assumptions on which arguments rely for their 'logical' coherence (Toulmin, 2003: 87).

With respect to the specific linguistic devices/resources dealt with, it should also be noted that virtually, all of them have dealt with in the wider linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics and meta-discourse literature. They include, for example, epistemic modals and evidentials (e.g. Chafe and Nichols, 1986; Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1986), so-called 'hedges' (e.g. Markkanen and Schröder, 1997) adversatives and concessives (e.g. Umbach, 2005; Winterstein, 2010), negation (e.g. Don, 2017; Pagano, 2002; Tottie, 1982), presupposition (e.g. Delogu, 2009) and other formulations which have previously been dealt with under the rubric of 'meta-discourse' (e.g. Crismore, 1989). But obviously this prior work is most typically directed at offering deep explications of the 'meaning' or communicative potential of these resources when considered as individual items. While I obviously draw from this prior work, I depart from it in bringing these various meanings together into a framework for the exploration of construals of putative readerships – and view them from this specific perspective.

At the same time as offering these proposals of general application to analyses of putative readership, this article also demonstrates the application of the proposed framework to an analysis of a collection of mass media texts which all mounted arguments on a topic of political and ideological import – the invasion of Gaza by the Israeli military in July 2014, in retaliation for rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas in the days immediately prior. According to reports released subsequently by the UN, the action resulted in more than 2000 Palestinian deaths (the majority of whom were civilians) and the deaths of 67 Israeli soldiers and six Israeli civilians.[1] The legitimacy/morality of the action (labelled 'Operation Protective Edge') was hotly debated in the international media and the collected texts present arguments both for and against. A repeated point of contention was the question of whether the action was 'proportionate'. The texts referenced include six

commentary pieces published in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israeli and Australian newspapers, a contribution to a discussion on the US CNN cable television network, and an extract from an interview with the then British deputy prime minister, Nick Clegg on LNC radio in the United Kingdom. In considering the various putative readerships construed by the author/speakers of these texts, this article thus provides insights into the nature and conduct of this public debate.

Preliminaries

Implied reader versus directly addressed reader

It needs to be acknowledged at the outset that sometimes authors of 'monologic' persuasive texts of the type under consideration may directly address intended readers and in so doing overtly reveal assumptions as to readers' actual or likely attitudes, beliefs and expectations. The author thereby indicates assumptions as to whether this intended addressee is 'likeminded' (holding or likely to hold the same view as the author) on the proposition being advanced at the current point in the text, or is what I will term, 'unlikeminded' (likely to be holding a view at odds with the author). By way of illustration consider the following opening to a commentary piece from the UK *Daily Mail*, published in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq by the United States, the United Kingdom and their allies in March 2003. At the time, the prospect of the United Kingdom being involved in this military action was being hotly contested in parliament and the media, with those opposed mounting large scale anti-war marches:

> [extract 1]
>
> MY NEIGHBOUR recently asked me, on behalf of her friend Julie Christie, to sign a petition against a war on Iraq. . . . Indeed many of you decent, caring and humanitarian Mail readers will have signed similar petitions–and some of you may even be marching today with my neighbour's friends against 'Bush's and Blair's War'. But I could not sign. And I cannot join this march. (Anne Leslie, *Daily Mail*, 15 February 2003)

Here, obviously, the author overtly construes a readership which is actually or potentially at odds with the author over the prospect of the United Kingdom joining the United States in the invasion of Iraq. The remainder of the article then 'addresses' this 'unlikeminded' reader with a view to changing her or his mind – seeking to win them over to the pro-invasion position. Such overt projectings of attitudes and beliefs onto the putative reader are of obvious interest in terms of analyses of the communicative workings of such persuasive texts. But for the purposes of this article, the focus will not be on this direct addressing of the reader – this kind of overt 'writing the reader into the text'. Instead, the concerns are with the typically less-easily-identifiable indirect or covert mechanisms by which attitudes, dispositions and beliefs are projected onto the implied reader and that reader is construed as sharing the author's viewpoint (i.e. 'likeminded'), being potentially at odds with the author ('un-likeminded'), or as yet uninformed, uncommitted vis-à-vis the proposition being advanced at that point in the text (what I will term the 'undecided', 'uncommitted' or 'persuadable' addressee).

'Stance' and the construal of readers/addressees

The characteristics which can be projected onto this implied reader by the text are, of course, quite diverse. Thus, it may be possible to detect authorial projections as to an implied reader's gender, sexuality, life-stage, domestic circumstances, ethnicity, life-style, educational level, and so on. The focus, however, of this article is narrower, confined to just what is projected onto the implied reader as to their actual or possible beliefs about the way the world is or used to be (where they stand epistemically), and the way it ought to be (where they stand attitudinally in terms of the happenings and the people involved in these).

Methodology, analytical framework and data

In the following, for obvious reasons, I focus on those options dealt with in the appraisal framework which I propose may have functionality vis-à-vis implied-reader effects.[2] More specifically, the focus is on the use by speakers/writers of those formulations which can be interpreted as construing a putative addressee who is (1) likeminded, (2) uncommitted/undecided (and hence, 'persuadable' to the author's viewpoint) or (3) un-likeminded.

In the discussion set out below, no claim is made to present a comprehensive account of this diverse set of mass media texts concerned with this 'Operation Protective Edge'. Rather, for the purposes of this article, extracts are drawn from texts which are broadly representative of the various sides to the debate.

Stance-taking and positioning the putative addressees

Likemindedness

In this section, I present proposals as to mechanisms by which the text signals authorial assumptions of attitudinal and epistemic likemindedness on the part of the construed addressee. Broadly, it is proposed that such implications of likemindedness are associated with formulations by which propositions are presented as dialogistically unproblematic, as not in tension with alternative or contrary propositions which might be, or might have been, advanced by other speakers/writers. These mechanisms can be divided into two types.

First, there are those likemindedness mechanisms which the appraisal framework, drawing on Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, classifies as 'monoglossic' utterances (Martin and White, 2005: chapter 3). These are bare assertions in which the speaker/writer chooses not to recognise or engage with the heteroglossic diversity of voices and value positions which always provide a backdrop against which all utterances operate. Second, there are several mechanisms which imply likemindedness which are 'heteroglossic' – that is to say, unlike 'monoglossic' utterances, these are formulations where this is some engagement with, or recognition of, other voices, value positions and potential responses. Specifically, these are formulations which signal anticipation on the author's part that the addressee will share some knowledge, belief or attitude, or alternatively they will be subject to the same expectations as the author. These options will be

dealt with in some detail below. (For extended treatments of these notions of the 'monoglossic' and 'heteroglossic' utterances, as formulated in the appraisal-framework literature, see White, 2000, 2003, 2010.)

Signalling of likemindedness – monoglossic assertion

With respect to likemindedness and the monoglossic utterance, a distinction is to be made between bare assertion and presupposition. As widely dealt with in the philosophy of language and pragmatics literature, presupposition involves formulations by which a particular proposition is treated as 'taken for granted' or a 'given', as an understanding, belief or attitude which is taken as universally held or agreed upon. (see for example, Carston, 1998; Delogu, 2009; Kempson, 1975; Simon-Vandenbergen et al., 2007). Several examples of negative assessment which are 'presupposed' in this way can be observed in the following extract from a comment piece published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in which the author, Nick Dyrenfurth, ultimately goes on to defend the Israeli government's action of invading Gaza:

[extract 2]

I'm not blind to Israel's faults. I deplore the rightwards shift of the nation's political culture. I mourn the collapse of Labor Zionism. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 July 2014)

Here presupposing formulations treat as 'givens' (as unproblematic and dialogistically 'inert') the propositions that Israel has 'faults', that there has been a 'rightwards shift' in its political cultural and a 'collapse in Labor Zionism'. In all three cases, the 'presupposition' involves the use of nominalisations ('Israel's faults', 'rightward shift', and 'collapse') along with clausal arrangements by which the propositions in question are made inaccessible to direct argumentation.

The ideological functionality of such presupposition in 'normalizing' or 'naturalizing' particular value positions has received wide treatment in the Critical Discourse Analysis literature (see for example, Bekalu, 2006; Polyzou, 2015; Sbisà, 1999; Van Dijk, 2003, 2005) and here, I largely rely on insights arising from that scholarship, even while wanting to point out that such a 'naturalizing' has a dialogistic potential – that is, to project the particular value position onto the construed reader in that it is this construed reader who is 'taken for granted' in this way.

The bare assertion is the second 'monoglossic' formulation which, it is proposed, construes propositions as unproblematic for the implied reader – that is, interpretable as implying that the reader already holds the view in question or will unproblematically accept it as fair, reasonable and/or well-founded. What I mean by 'bare assertion' is exemplified in following utterances, again from the comment piece by Dyrenfurth just referenced:

[extract 3]

The world has much to learn from Israel's scientific, technological and environmental endeavours.

[extract 4]

The modern revival of the Hebrew language is . . . extraordinary.

[extract 5]

The West Bank settlements are a cancer eating away at Israel's democratic soul.

These are 'bare assertions' (i.e. monoglossic) in that, for example, they are not modalised or attributed to external sources, they do not involve authorial emphasis directed at challenging alternative positions, they do not involve the negation of alternative propositions, and they do not involve any efforts by the author to offer a ground or a justification for the attitudes being advanced. Thus, the monoglossic assertion, 'The modern revival of Hebrew is extraordinary' stands in opposition, for example to the following invented utterances, all of which would be classified as 'heteroglossic' in an appraisal-framework analysis on the basis that they involve some engagement with, or recognition of other voices, alternative viewpoints or potential responses:

In my view/I believe the modern revival of Hebrew is extraordinary.; Many people feel the modern revival of Hebrew is extraordinary.

(grounding the proposition in the contingent subjectivity of the author or of some external source)

The facts of the matter are that the modern revival of Hebrew is extraordinary.

(heightened emphasis on the part of the author directed at heading off some alternative viewpoint)

By any measure the modern revival of Hebrew was extraordinary because it hadn't been spoken as a mother tongue for almost 2000 years.

(the attitudinal proposition bolstered with grounds/ persuasive justification)

Admittedly the modern revival of Hebrew is extraordinary.

(speaker presents as reluctantly coming to personally hold the view of some previously adversarial voice)

The modern revival of Hebrew is actually not all that extraordinary.

(invoking an alternative viewpoint while at the same time rejecting that viewpoint)

As indicated earlier, all such formulations are 'heteroglossic' in the Bakhtinian sense – and hence, stand in contradistinction to monoglossic bare assertions – in that they do recognise, engage with, or allow for alternative voices and viewpoints. Thus, the 'meaning' or functionality of the bare assertion, as a choice as to how to formulate a

proposition, is to be understood in terms of contrast with these various 'heteroglossic' options, as a choice with particular communicative consequences which sets it apart from these other available options. With respect to extracts 3, 4 and 5 cited earlier, the effect, of course, is to present as unproblematic for the addressee assessments which are both positive and negative towards Israel. Thus, the implication or expectation entailed by the text is that the addressee will find unexceptional a stance towards Israel which views positively its past achievements but is critical of at least some aspects of its current politics.

The heteroglossic and likemindedness – Author/addressee concurrence

As indicated earlier, there are several heteroglossic formulations which construe likemindedness in projecting understandings, beliefs, attitudes and expectations held by the author on to the implied reader. The first of these involves wordings which overtly signal speaker/addressee concurrence – for example, formulations such as *of course, obviously* and *admittedly*. These formulations have received attention in the pragmatics literature under the rubric of 'discourse/pragmatic particles/markers', with various proposals as to the range of functions served or meanings conveyed (see for example, Lewis, 2006; Simon-Vandenbergen et al., 2007). The literature is generally in agreement that, broadly speaking, these wordings function to signal an expectation on the part of the speaker that the addressee will already be in receipt of the information being conveyed (e.g. in cases of uncontentious 'factual' material) or will already share or at least regard as unproblematic and well-motivated the assessment, interpretation, directive or prediction being advanced. Such a functionality is illustrated in the following excerpt from the CNN interview programme, 'The Lead with Jade Tapper'. The following commentary on the Israeli military's action in Gaza was offered by Avner Gvaryahu, a spokesperson for an organisation of former Israeli soldiers, 'Breaking The Silence'. The occasion was the release of a report by the organisation a year or so after Operation Protective Edge:

> [extract 6]
>
> So, first of all, I would say I'm not a pacifist. I myself served for three years. . . . Not only do we believe in Israel's right to exist, but Israeli government and Israeli military's obligation to protect its citizens. But what we're asking is . . . do we not have to make sure that we not cross the red lines? And in our perspective, there is actually an idea of how you fight a war. There's actually documentation of how you fight a war. It's called the Spirit of the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] . . . What we see in this operation is basically taking these ideas and throwing them out the window. . . . Of course, protect yourself. *Of course*, Hamas is a terrorist organization, and we have to do whatever we can to protect our ourselves, but there are also limitations in war. [emphasis mine] (broadcast July 7, 2015–transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1507/07/cg.02.html)

The second 'of course' is currently of interest: 'Of course Hamas is a terrorist organisation'. It serves several rhetorical functions, but the particular effect to be attended to

here is that it construes this negative assessment of Hamas as a 'given', with the author taking for granted that this is also the view of the addressee.

A further mechanism for projecting values and beliefs onto the addressee (i.e. signalling an authorial expectation of concurrence) involves the use of a particular type of rhetorical question, those in which the author assumes the reader will necessarily supply a particular answer. This mechanism is deployed several times in the following excerpt, again from the *Sydney Morning Herald* commentary piece by Dyrenfurth cited earlier:

[extract 7]

> Which brings us to the tragedy unfolding in Gaza. . . . Like many others, I struggle to reconcile the military logic of 'Operation Protective Edge' with the appalling loss of life. . . . Still I am deeply troubled by the response of Australians and much of the West on two counts. First, what do Israel's critics expect? . . . Should it ignore the rockets and weapons-smuggling tunnels? . . . Would a few hundred Jewish Israeli deaths even up the blood-soaked scoreboard?

Here we note that the textual logic 'relies' on the reader supplying such answers as 'What Israel's critics want is unreasonable/unrealistic', 'No, Israel should not/cannot ignore the rockets and tunnels', and so on. The putative addressee is thus construed as of a view to supply such answers, as being of the same mind as the author in this regard.

The same device was employed by Berl Falbaum in an op-ed piece for the *Detroit News*:

[Extract 8]

> 'Look, when militants in Gaza fire rockets at Israel, then Israel has a right to respond, but with some proportionality'. So writes *New York Times* Columnist Nicholas Kristof, one of many who have called Israel's response to Hamas missile attacks 'disproportionate'. But here is the issue: No one has defined what they mean by 'disproportionate' or 'proportionality'. What is Israel to do? Should it purposely miss its targets to achieve proportionality? Should it let some missile, intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome defense system, fall on Israelis in order to suffer causalities? (*Detroit News*, 18 July 2014)

Here the indicated assumption is that the reader, in response to questions such as 'What is Israel to do?', will supply answers along the lines of, 'It had no other choice to take such action/The notion of "proportionality" is ridiculous, given these circumstances'.[3]

The heteroglossic and likemindedness – Shared reactions of 'surprise'

Another mechanism for construing likemindedness involves assessments of counter-expectedness – implications that the addressee will share with the author the view that some report, happening or situation is surprising or unexpected. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* op-ed article cited earlier, the author goes on to criticise those who are currently condemning the Israeli action in Gaza at a time when there has been an upsurge of anti-Semitism. The following is offered:

[Extract 9]

> . . . the hysterical hypocrisy is sickening and dangerous too. Does posting Facebook photos of dead Palestinian children serve any meaningful purpose? . . . Synagogues and Jewish businesses in Europe are being attacked. Crowds chant 'Gas the Jews'. In Germany no less. . . . On Saturday a cartoon featuring an all-powerful hook-nosed Jew appeared in a mainstream newspaper. Yes, in 2014.

Here, there is an obvious instance of a virtual dialogic interaction with the intended reader – specifically the 'Yes, in 2014' in the final sentence of the extract. Here, the author presents as sharing with the putative reader a reaction of shock/disbelief that such a cartoon could be published in a contemporary mainstream Australian newspaper.

It should be noted, however, that a related formulation, evaluations by the author of situations, happenings, beliefs or viewpoints as counter-expected (and hence, potentially 'surprising') do not necessarily construe an author–addressee relationship of likemindedness. Consider the following from extract 6 above (the former Israeli soldier questioning the Israeli military action in Gaza):

[extract 10]

> Of course, protect yourself. Of course, Hamas is a terrorist organization, and we have to do whatever we can to protect our ourselves, but there are also limitations in war.

Here, the speaker presents his viewpoint that 'there are limitations to war', and hence that the Israeli action in Gaza may be illegitimate, as contrary to expectations triggered by the monoglossically asserted propositions that Hamas is a 'terrorist organization' and that Israelis have to whatever they can to protect themselves. The second proposition (giving rise to the implication that Israel's action in Gaza is questionable) is thus presented as counter-indicated (through the adversative 'but') by the previous propositions (that Israel has an absolute right to protect itself). The text here is somewhat underspecified as to in whom this countered expectation might be located. But it is certainly plausible to interpret the text here as indicating that this is what the addressee may be expecting – that is, the author projects onto the reader the expectation that, since Israel has an absolute right to protect itself, then the assault on Gaza is entirely justified. The author is thus offering the reader a 'corrective', so to speak. In 'But there are also limitations in war', he offers a challenge to what he presents as potentially the view of the addressee that the Israel action is entirely justified.

In a sense then, this can be seen as a point of potential authorial/addressee un-like-mindedness, even if only momentary with respect to the flow of the text. Crucially, however, the potentially contrary view of the putative reader is presented as reasonable or understandable, as a logical corollary of the shared view that 'we must do whatever we can to protect ourselves'.

The construed addressee as 'persuadable'

Dialogistic expansiveness

I turn now to the mechanisms by which the addressee can be construed as potentially not yet committed to, or convinced of, or aware of, the merits of the proposition currently being advanced – as potentially questioning of, or resistant to, the proposition, but as nevertheless persuadable as to the proposition's validity.

First, there are those formulations which have variously been dealt with under such headings as 'epistemic modality', 'evidentiality' and 'hedge' (see for example, Chafe and Nichols, 1986; Coates, 1983; Markkanen and Schröder, 1997; Palmer, 1986). It has often been the case previously that such formulations have been interpreted in the context of concerns with 'truth function', and have been said to indicate a lack of commitment by the speaker to the 'truth value' to the current proposition. However, the appraisal literature, under the influence of the Bakhtinian view that all utterances are dialogistically responsive and/or anticipatory, aligns with scholars such as Myers (1989: 12)[4] in proposing that it is necessary to recognise that such formulations may alternatively or additionally function to signal recognition by the speaker that the viewpoint they are advancing is but one of a range of alternative viewpoint in play in the current communicative context. They function to signal that the speaker is allowing for the possibility of alternative viewpoints and thereby allowing space for those alternatives in the current 'conversation'. Accordingly, in the appraisal literature such formulations are characterised as 'dialogistically expansive' in that they open up space for other voices and viewpoints – and are given the label 'entertain' (i.e. they 'entertain' the possibility of alternative viewpoints).

By way of an example, consider the following statement from the then British Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, speaking on LBC radio in the United Kingdom on 16 July 2014:

[Extract 11]

I have to say I really do think now the Israeli response appears to be deliberately disproportionate. It is amounting now to a disproportionate form of collective punishment. It is leading to a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is just unacceptable.

Of interest here is how Clegg framed the proposition that the Israeli military action was 'disproportionate' – that is, framed with 'I have to say', 'I really do think' and 'appears to be'. Clegg thus refrains from asserting this assessment categorically (monoglossically), choosing rather to explicitly ground the proposition in his own contingent subjectivity – as what he feels compelled 'to say', what he 'thinks' and as only what 'appears' to be the case. Thus, even while forcefully advancing this viewpoint, he nevertheless presents it as just his view, and hence, as a viewpoint potentially in tension with alternative viewpoints. Such a formulation, then, can be interpreted as the speaker anticipating the possibility that the addressee may regard the proposition as problematic, as open to question. The addressee being construed here, then is one who may need to be won over to the merits of the position being advanced – that is, one who

may question the speaker's view but is nonetheless 'persuadable'. Thus, we find that such dialogistic expansiveness (i.e. opening up of the 'dialog' to other voices) is often followed in texts of this type by material in support of the proposition. We can observe this in miniature, so to speak, in extract 11 above. The initial statement of Clegg's position, as just discussed, is clearly modalised (overtly framed as the speaker's own viewpoint). Then Clegg comes closer to categorically asserting the view with, 'It is amounting now to a disproportionate form of collective punishment'. The only allowance now for an alternative viewpoint is in the assertion that the military action 'amounts to' a disproportionate form of collective punishment (as opposed to it categorically 'being a disproportionate form of collective punishment'). Then, in the final sentence, Clegg shifts to a categorical assertion of what will be the consequences of the action – 'a humanitarian crisis' – by way of motivation for the negative view of the military action being advanced.

It does need to be noted, however, that such modalisations (recognitions of the possibility of alternative viewpoints) are not always elements in some deliberate project of persuasion being undertaken more globally by the text. The proposition being advanced may be only incidental to the larger scale argument being advanced, and the recognition that the addressee may find the proposition problematic can be seen as strategic in avoiding any unnecessary alienating of such anticipated readers.

Justification and the 'persuadable' addressee

An obvious feature of texts of the type under consideration is that they are directed at arguing a case or advancing a viewpoint – that is, they 'argue' by providing justification and motivation for one or more contentious propositions. Thus, all the texts referenced in this article are directed at being persuasive with respect to contentious propositions around the legitimacy/illegitimacy of the Israeli assault on Gaza. For example, some are directed at convincing the reader of the illegitimacy of the Israeli action and do this by comparing the devastation inflicted on the Gazans by the Israel action with the impact on the Israeli people of the Hamas rocket attacks. Those which take the counter view are directed at convincing the reader of the legitimacy of the Israeli action and do this by arguing that that such comparisons are irrelevant and by invoking a belief in the absolute right of nation states to defend themselves against such 'terroristic' actions.

The following summarised versions of the argumentation advanced in two commentary articles are offered by way of illustration of this – one arguing for the action and the other arguing against it:

Article 1: 'Hamas rocket attacks provoked Israel's ground offensive into Gaza Strip'

Sharyn Mittelman, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 July 2014: in support of the action (key lines of argumentation summarised)

[Distillation of primary proposition]: The military action is justified/legitimate/required

[because]

'Israel is currently under attack as Hamas and other jihadist groups have fired more than 1600 rockets into its territory this month [sending] millions of Israeli citizens – Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze – sprinting into bomb shelters. . . . It is not a situation any county would tolerate'.

[because]

When the Hamas attacks began, Israel initially responded with targeted air strikes aimed at stopping the rockets and sent a message to Hamas on July 3 that 'quiet will be met with quiet', adding 'Israel has no interest in an escalation. If Hamas reins in the shooting now, we won't act, either'. But that peace offering was ignored.

[because]

After rejecting various ceasefire offers, Hamas sent 'terrorists' through tunnels to attack a nearby kibbutz, which meant 'Israel felt it had little choice but to order the ground operation into the Gaza Strip on July 18 to destroy these tunnels, 34 of which have, so far, been discovered'

[because]

For Israel, every civilian death, be it Palestinian or Israeli, is a tragedy to be avoided; for Hamas, Israeli civilians are the target of their rocket fire. Even ambassador Ibrahim Khraishi, the Palestinian representative to the United Nations Human Rights Council, said on July 9 on PA TV: 'The missiles that are now being launched against Israel, each and every missile constitutes a crime against humanity, whether it hits or misses, because it is directed at civilian targets'.

Article 2: 'Bernie Sanders Got It Right. Israel Did Use Disproportionate Force in Gaza'

Asher Shechter, *Haaretz*, 13 April 2016 – critical of Israeli action

[Distillation of primary proposition]: Even while Israel has a clear right to defend itself against such attacks, this particular action, given its scope and intensity was unjustified/illegitimate,

[because]

There was too little regard for civilian casualties – an estimated 1000 Palestinian civilians were killed [as reported by the UN but contested by the Israeli government], including many children. [In the days immediately before the Israeli military entered Gaza, the Hamas rocket attacks had not killed any Israelis. Subsequently rockets launched during the operation killed five Israelis and injured 60.] An investigation by the Associated Press into 247 Israeli airstrikes that hit residential compounds during the action found that over 60 percent of those killed during the attacks were children, women and older men, all of them most likely civilians.

[because]

While it is true Hamas was culpable for launching rocket attacks from within its civilian population, 'we must remember that Gaza is also one of the most densely populated places on

earth. When Israel opted to use force . . . it had every reason to expect a high number of civilian casualties, given the considerable death tolls of its previous Gaza excursions'.

[because]

'Israel used an unprecedented level of force against Hamas, within a highly concentrated civilian population. The large number of civilian casualties, the magnitude of the damage, and the testimonies of IDF [Israeli military] veterans point to a policy that made too little an effort to discriminate between combatants and civilians'.

The probably obvious point I'm focussing on here is that in offering all these grounds/justification for their primary contention (i.e. the legitimacy/illegitimacy of the Israeli action), the authors thus construe the addressee as potentially unfamiliar with, questioning of, or even resistant to, the author's position. If the imagined reader was assumed to hold the author's view, then it could be taken for granted. There would be no reason to argue for it. By then, setting out justifications for the primary proposition, by taking steps to 'convince', the author, thereby, constructs a putative addressee who is potentially at odds with the author but is nevertheless potentially persuadable – who may be won over to the author's position.

Of course, texts of this type often advance and argue for contentious propositions which are in addition to, or subsidiary to, the primary 'thesis' of the piece. Again, the effect is to construe the addressee as potentially unconvinced of the validity of these propositions, but also as potentially 'persuadable'. For example, Nicholas Kristof in a piece for *the New York Times* asserts, essentially as an aside to a more general criticism, that the Israeli government is misguided in its apparent belief that this action is a way to achieve peace and to end the threat of attack. Tellingly, this is not simply categorically asserted, but is justified by means of the following:

[extract 12]

In fact, we've seen this movie before [i.e. Israel taking military action in an attempt to achieve peace]: Israel responded to aggression by invading Lebanon in 1982 and 2006, and Gaza in 2008; each time, hawks cheered. Yet each invasion in retrospect accomplished at best temporary military gains while killing large numbers of innocents; they didn't solve any problems. ('Who's Right and Wrong in the Middle East?', *New York Times*, 19 July 2014)

Thus, the reader is construed as needing to be persuaded that the action is not a way to achieve peace and security for Israelis.

There is, however, an additional complication to attend to, in terms of construals of the putative reader. It must be noted while, at one level, such argumentation construes the addressee as potentially uncommitted or undecided as to the merits of the author's position, at a deeper level, there are also projections of authorial/addressee likemindedness. This is with respect to the underlying, typically unstated 'warrants' on which such arguments rely – as mentioned earlier in the opening of the article. Key here is Toulmin's (2003: 87) notion that in 'everyday' argumentation, there will be an unstated premise, or set of premises, by which the justifications or grounds presented in support of some

contentious claim can function to 'entail' that contentious claim. Since this 'warrant' is unstated and hence 'taken for granted', the implication is that the addressee shares with the author the underlying, undeclared beliefs or attitudes by which the argumentation is 'logical'. For example, in the above example (extract 12), an assumption is signalled that the addressee will share with the author, the belief that the current military action and its circumstances are sufficiently similar to Israel's actions in 1982, 2006 and 2008 for their outcomes to be a reliable guide as to the outcome of the current action. The addressee is thus construed as seeing these prior military actions as sufficiently analogous to the current action. In article 1 above (by Sharyn Mittelman), the unstated premise on which the argument relies (and which is projected on to the addressee) is along the lines of, 'Israel/nation states should/has the right to undertake extreme military action of this type when faced with threats of this order, even if this results in many civilians being injured or killed'. The argumentation mounted, then is not so much with respect to what is assumed to be a basic right of nation states such as Israel, but with respect to convincing the reader that some baseline of provocation has been reached. The 'warrant', which the reader is assumed to share with the author, is that base-line provocations of this order (rocket and mortar attacks) 'naturally' entail the legitimacy of devastating retaliations of the order of the Israeli military's ground invasion.

Construing the addressee as un-likeminded

Generally speaking, it is unusual for the authors of this kind of mass-communicative texts to construe an addressee who is committedly at odds with the author. And even when possible opposition is countenanced, this is nevertheless treated as surmountable, with the addressee subsequently construed as persuadable. (Such an effect has already been dealt with in the above treatment of formulations which characterise events and situations as counter-expected.) This was the case with the op-ed piece by Anne Lesley cited earlier (extract 1) in which the case is made for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Even while Lesley overtly represents the reader as likely to be opposed to her viewpoint, a lengthy argument is then mounted in favour of the invasion, thereby construing the reader as potentially persuadable, in light of all the 'new' information, evidence and reasoning being supplied. It would, in fact, be strange for such texts, give their intent to persuade, to construe the addressee as immovably of a contrary viewpoint. (These days, it is in the user/reader comments supplied at the bottom of online news items where we encounter speakers (a commenter on the article) who construe an addressees (e.g. some other commenter) as committedly at odds with that speaker – that is, as being their dialogic adversary.)

Negation and potential un-likemindedness

The final formulation to be considered – in terms of construals of author/addressee disalignment – is that of negation. The various rhetorical functions served by negatives have received some quite detailed consideration in the linguistics/pragmatics literature (see for example, Don, 2017; Pagano, 2002; Tottie, 1982) and I draw on the observation repeatedly made that negatives propositions 'invoke' the positive propositions which

they contradict. Thus for example, when Dyrenfurth writes, 'The crisis did not begin a few weeks ago with events in the West Bank', there is a referencing or putting into play the contrary proposition that the crisis 'did begin a few weeks ago'. There is the suggestion that someone, somewhere, may believe this or has been asserting this.

As scholars of negation have noted, negation can be multi-directional in terms of implication as to the source of the contrary proposition (the proposition in the affirmative) which is being denied. In some cases, the source whose proposition is being contradicted is some specific prior speaker – either overtly identified or, alternatively, implied. In other cases, it is the addressee who is construed as potentially holding the view which is being countered. In other cases, the directionality may be ambiguous or may suggest both some external source and the addressee.

To illustrate this, consider the negative proposition, 'Israel is not fighting the terrorist Hamas' in the following extract from a comment piece by the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Mike Carlton:

[extract 13]

> As I write, after just over a week of this invasion, the death toll of Palestinians is climbing towards 1000. Most are civilians, many are children. Assaulting Gaza by land, air and sea, Israel has destroyed homes and reduced entire city blocks to rubble. It has attacked schools, mosques and hospitals. . . . The onslaught is indiscriminate and unrelenting, with but one possible conclusion: *Israel is not fighting the terrorists of Hamas*. [emphasis mine] In defiance of the laws of war and the norms of civilised behaviour, it is waging its own war of terror on the entire Gaza population of about 1.7 million people. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 July 2014)

That Israel was, indeed 'fighting the Hamas terrorist' was, of course, a proposition which had been widely promulgated at the time by the Israeli government and those commentators supporting the action. It is most obviously with such external, third parties (not being directly addressed) that the author thereby indicates dis-alignment (i.e. being un-likeminded). Nevertheless, since no specific source is directly referenced so as to be contradicted, there is still some potential for the denial to be interpreted as also directed at the anticipated reader. That is to say, it is possible for the implication to arise that the author is anticipating here that the addressee may also hold the opposing view – potentially having been influenced by these other voices. The denial can thus function as a 'corrective' to readers who may hold this view. The putative addressee is thus construed as potentially un-likeminded with respect to this particular proposition, but as being 'persuadable' to the contrary view, once supplied with the 'new' evidence and reasoning now being outlined.

The extract already quoted from the article by Dyrenfurth contained an instance of a denial which, in contrast, is more obviously directed at the addressee, and not at some 3rd-person external source:

> I'm not blind to Israel's faults. I deplore the rightwards shift of the nation's political culture.

Here, of course, the implication is that someone, somewhere, might propose that he *is* 'blind to Israel's faults'. Hereby, an addressee is constructed who might hold such a

negative view of the author, given that (1) he has just praised Israel's achievements and (2) is about to defend its action in invading Gaza. Again, there is a 'corrective' function – allowing that the reader may be un-likeminded in this regard, but presenting this as essentially inadvertent, as based on an unfounded expectations or lack of knowledge which is about to be rectified.

Conclusion

By the discussion earlier, I have outlined an approach for developing systematic accounts of the putative addressees which authors 'write into their texts', and of the mechanisms by which such interpolations are achieved. In setting out this approach, the article drew on prior work in the appraisal literature on dialogistic positioning, on Toulmin's account of the role of 'warrants' in everyday argumentation, and on prior work in the linguistics, discourse analytical and pragmatics literature on modality, negation, discourse/pragmatic particles, adversatives and rhetorical causality (structures by which material is provided in support of contentious propositions). The discussion was novel in establishing how these various resources relate to each other in terms of signalling expectations by the speaker that the anticipated addressee will be (1) aligned with the speaker vis-à-vis a given proposition, will be (2) as yet uncommitted or undecided vis-à-vis a given proposition or will be (3) dis-aligned with the speaker re a given proposition.

More specially, the following case was made.

Speaker/addressee likemindedness can be construed through utterances which (1) presuppose a given proposition, where (2) a proposition is 'monoglossically' (categorically) asserted without any supporting justification, where (3) author/addressee concurrence is signalled through adjuncts such as *'of course', 'obviously' and 'admittedly',* where (4) it is implied that the addressee will share the author's shock or sense of surprise and (5) where it is assumed the addressee will 'agree' with the author in supplying a particular answer to a rhetorical question. Likemindedness is also implicated when the author takes for granted the underlying 'warrant' on which some argumentation relies – that is, assumes the addressee will regard as a 'given' the belief, understanding, attitude or expectation by which the justification being offered logically entails the proposition being argued for.

Putative addressee uncommittedness to a proposition being advanced by the author can be signalled by the use of so-called epistemic modals, evidentials and related formulations (instances of what the appraisal framework terms values of 'entertain'). As well, uncommittedness accompanied by persuadability is associated with structures by which justifications or grounds are supplied for contentious propositions. In the case of argumentative or persuasive texts of the type being referenced here, this is an unavoidable feature, at least with respect to the central proposition which provides the text's thesis. The central purpose of such texts is to address this perceived potential uncommittedness and to defeat it – to win the addressee over to the text's central proposition. At the same time, of course, it is typically the case that texts will include numerous other propositions with respect to which the addressee may be construed not as uncommitted, but as either likeminded or un-likeminded.

Putative addressee un-likemindedness (dis-alignment) may be signalled by the author overtly stating an expectation of addressee disagreement or opposition. Possible un-likemindedness, of a textually more momentary or passing nature, may also be signalled when the speaker 'corrects' some expectation which the addressee is presented as being potentially subject or, similarly, when the author uses negation to deny a proposition which the addressee is construed as potentially subject to.

Such analyses provide for systemic insights into the communicative workings of such texts, based on findings as to just which propositions are associated with assumed addressee likemindedness, with assumed addressee uncommittedness and with assumed addressee un-likemindedness. Thus, the potential persuasiveness cum ideological potential of such texts can be explored as an interplay between the multiple propositions which the author affords these various dialogistic statuses.

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1. These findings are taken from a report by the United Nations Human Rights Council published in 2015 – see https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/coigazaconflict/pages/reportcoigaza.aspx. (accessed 1 March 2019)
2. For a comprehensive account of those meanings dealt with in the appraisal framework see White (2002, 2015) and Martin and White (2005).
3. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, 'proportionality' in military conflict is understood in the following terms:

   > The principle of proportionality prohibits attacks against military objectives which are expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. In other words, the principle of proportionality seeks to limit damage caused by military operations by requiring that the effects of the means and methods of warfare used must not be disproportionate to the military advantage sought. (https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/proportionality–accessed 1 March 2019)

4. Myers proposes that the function of such locutions, at least as they operate in academic discourse, is not to mark knowledge claims as uncertain, but rather to mark the claim as 'unacknowledged by the discourse community' (Myers, 1989: 12).

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